

Intelligence gathering deemed as necessary CIA official defends organization's policies

By Eric Schmitz

"A blind giant is a pretty helpless guy," the nation's number-two spy aid Monday defending the necessity of government intelligence operations.

Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), told a luncheon audience of the Columbus Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs that, contrary to popular belief, it is "nonsense" to think the CIA has "a foreign policy of its own."

WALTERS CLAIMS the CIA does extensive and thorough reporting to both the legislative and executive branches of government which keep close watch on the agency's functions.

"We do what the American people want us to do," Walters said, adding but we don't feel we have to do everything in Macy's window."

Walters was apparently under orders not to discuss recent reports that the CIA has undertaken possible illegal surveillance of an estimated 10,000 U.S. citizens, including members of Congress.

CIA Director William Colby will testify next week before a special Senate committee investigating charges of illegal spying. The National Security Act prohibits the agency from operating domestically.

WALTERS' SPEECH surveyed the broad scope of today's world affairs including the military strength of the superpowers, detente, the growth of underdeveloped nations, the Middle East, and Vietnam.

Walters described today's U.S.-Soviet relations as at a "stage of unstable equilibrium."

He said the USSR has almost twice the men in its armed forces as the U.S., but overall strength is somewhat equal.

Walters defended the role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Europe saying the organization is necessary to maintain a balance of power.

WALTERS, WHO has been in military intelligence since World War II, said intelligence gathering is necessary if the U.S. is to make reasonable agreements with foreign countries, particularly China and the USSR.

He explained policy makers have to know "what's going on" in areas such as technology and political leadership if they are to negotiate firmly.

"The Russians respect strong people," he said. "And our negotiations with the USSR 'are determined by their perceptions of us.'"

WALTERS SAID he wasn't necessarily an advocate of U.S. military supremacy, but added, "the best place to defend the United States is as far forward as possible."

He almost defended the U.S. role in Southeast Asia saying, "We still hope for a secure republic in Vietnam."

"There are plenty of North Vietnamese killing people in South Vietnam," Walters said in a raised voice, "but there are no South Vietnamese killing people in North Vietnam."

WALTERS ONLY briefly mentioned the Mideast strife and said "we do seem to be improving our situation with the Arabs."

He also mentioned South America and Africa as two areas of growing importance.

African countries, Walters said, "are on the march upwards." He said the USSR is supplying military assistance to 15 African countries and 11 are receiving similar aid from mainland China.

In South America, Walters emphasized on the growth of Brazil.

"THERE IS a superpower growing in Brazil," Walters said. "For six straight years their gross national product has increased by 10 per cent."

Near the end of his talk, Walters drifted back into a pitch for the necessity of government intelligence.

"Whether we like it or not, there is a silent battlefield," he said. "The U.S. cannot stumble forward into the future completely blind."

Walters expressed concern about recent cutbacks in CIA personnel and said the agency is relying greatly on intelligence operations of U.S. allies. However, Walters said he can still sum up his attitude toward the CIA in one word, "reassurance."

HE SAID he thinks the American people also realize the importance of the CIA, in spite of recent criticism. Walters said there have been 1,750 employment applications to the agency so far this year.

Walters ended the speech saying he would like to see a change in the CIA's biblical motto, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

Walters said the motto should read, "You must know the truth and the truth will keep you free."